

Exxon Mobil Corporation
5959 Las Colinas Boulevard
Irving, Texas 75039-2298

Kenneth P. Cohen
Vice President
Public and Government Affairs



November 20, 2015

Mr. Lee Bollinger
President, Columbia University
202 Low Library
535 W. 116th Street, Mail Code 4309
New York, NY 10027

Dear Mr. Bollinger,

It is my understanding that Columbia University's research policy forbids manipulation of research materials as well as "the change or omission of data or results such that the Research is not accurately represented in the Research Record."

I am writing to bring to your attention what appears to be a clear violation of your policy by a Columbia faculty member and a team of graduate students at Columbia who compiled two inaccurate and deliberately misleading reports about ExxonMobil's climate change research that were recently published by the Los Angeles Times.

The reports, produced by a team headed by Susanne Rust, an instructor at the Columbia Journalism School, cherry-picked – and distorted – statements attributed to various company employees to wrongly suggest definitive conclusions about the risk of climate change were reached decades ago by company researchers. Columbia's team ignored statements, included in the same documents they cited, demonstrating that our researchers recognized the developing nature of climate science at the time, which mirrored global scientific understanding. And they ignored information provided by the company that contradicted the erroneous story line.

According to the Columbia Journalism School website, this research work was underwritten in whole or in part by several groups, including the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, which have a stated position and bias against the oil and gas industry. This important fact was not disclosed to the readers of the Los Angeles Times.

All of the above violated principles of objectivity that not only should be expected from representatives of Columbia University but are also required by Columbia's Institutional Policy on Misconduct in Research.

ExxonMobil made every effort – verbally and in writing – to inform Ms. Rust and her team of these significant factual errors. Despite our best efforts, they produced reports that suggested we "knew" the impact of climate change in the 1980s, chose to ignore or suppress that knowledge, stopped or curtailed ongoing climate research and shifted to a policy of funding climate change denial.

In numerous conversations with our staff, not only did Ms. Rust insist that she was not pursuing that narrative, but she openly expressed contempt -- in conversations and in writing -- for InsideClimate News, an online environmental advocacy site which had published similar erroneous stories. You can imagine our surprise and dismay when Ms. Rust and her Columbia team's work repeated many of the same factual errors, omissions and out-of-context citations that the InsideClimate News team had published and had been the subject of her criticism. Interestingly, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund also underwrites the work of InsideClimate News -- and the founder and publisher of InsideClimate News also performed work for the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Steve Coll, dean of Columbia's Journalism School, has been quoted as saying there were no connections between the work of the Columbia team and InsideClimate News. Mr. Coll suggested it was only a coincidence that both teams undertook the same research using the same documents and reached a virtually identical, yet inaccurate, story line.

The pursuit of this false narrative is particularly disturbing given that ExxonMobil has a continuous history of researching climate science that stretches back nearly 40 years. That research has been conducted in conjunction with governmental bodies like the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and through work with leading research universities, including Stanford, MIT -- and Columbia.

This work has produced more than 150 publications, including more than 50 peer-reviewed papers -- a fact Ms. Rust mentioned only in passing.

In contrast to the narrative produced by the Columbia team, our research has been focused on three key areas: broadening the understanding of climate change science, finding ways to reduce fossil fuel emissions, and working to research lower-carbon energy sources. ExxonMobil scientists have secured nearly 300 patents related to emissions reductions and related applications, and our researchers led or contributed to key breakthroughs in the lithium battery and solar panels, to name just two prominent examples of these efforts.

At the same time we have engaged with policymakers and other political and business leaders to consider crafting sound policies -- such as a revenue-neutral carbon tax -- that would allow society to address climate change risks in a responsible manner that recognizes the central importance of energy to economic growth and prosperity.

We recognize that our past participation in industry coalitions to oppose ineffective climate policies subjects us to criticism by climate-activist groups -- but we reject the Columbia team's characterization of them as supporting climate denial.

Turning to a detailed critique of the two reports written by the Columbia team, the first was published by the Los Angeles Times on Oct. 9. It concluded that ExxonMobil "knew" the risks of climate change in the 1980s and used that certainty to plan for a melting Arctic when our Canadian affiliate, Imperial Oil, was exploring the possibility of developing assets in the Beaufort Sea.

The report accused the company of "quietly incorporating climate change projections into the company's planning" and then went on to cite two instances in which the company discussed the potential changes to the Arctic in public – at conferences involving industry, academia and government officials.

In discussions with Ms. Rust we outlined our extensive research history and also included some additional important contextual information, including but not limited to the fact that nobody "knew" with certainty either the dangers of climate change, or its primary causes, in the 1980s. Ms. Rust was in possession of a presentation to the board of Exxon from 1989 that made that very point.

It is also instructive to consider that the executive summary of the report to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change by Working Group 1 in 1990 said the following:

The size of this warming is broadly consistent with predictions of climate models, but it is also of the same magnitude as natural climate variability. Thus the observed increase could be largely due to this natural variability, alternatively this variability and other human factors could have offset a still larger human-induced greenhouse warming. The unequivocal detection of the enhanced greenhouse effect from observations is not likely for a decade or more.

It wasn't until the second assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, published in 1995, when the following conclusion was reached:

The balance of evidence suggests a discernible human influence on global climate.

We explained to Ms. Rust that the Columbia team's focus on potential impacts from rising sea levels and melting permafrost in the Canadian Arctic were just two of dozens of potential scenarios examined by company researchers, a fact confirmed by scientists and contractors interviewed by Columbia's team, but not given the proper emphasis in their reports.

We further informed her that the careful consideration of all potential outcomes, no matter how little or great their chances of happening, is standard operating procedure for any company considering multi-billion dollar investments in projects that would be expected to withstand a range of possible environmental changes for up to half a century into the future.

The Columbia team's second report, published Oct. 23, is also deeply flawed, and the way the company was treated reveals significant ethical lapses.

Ms. Rust contacted us late on the day on Oct. 22 to say she had filed a story with the Los Angeles Times in which a comment from the company could be inserted if we so wished. She gave us a deadline of less than 24 hours to add a comment in a story which had already been written, and which, according to a description of the series published by the Los Angeles Times, had been a year in the making.

To make matters worse, Ms. Rust refused to provide copies of company documents that the Columbia team obtained from our public archives that formed the basis for the story. Only after we guessed from her vague description – and after more than 12 additional hours passed – did she confirm which company documents she intended to cite.

We also have concerns about the ethical behavior of at least one member of Ms. Rust's team, which included Sara Jerving, Katie Jennings, Masako Melissa Hirsch and Dino Grandoni. We have been told by individuals quoted in the Oct. 9 story that Ms. Jerving, a reporter and social media writer for the advocacy group Center for Media and Democracy, misrepresented herself as a Columbia Arctic researcher and made no mention of the fact that she was affiliated with the School of Journalism or that the research might eventually be published in a newspaper.

Several of the individuals have said they would not have spoken with Ms. Jerving if she had been transparent about the nature of her research.

Ultimately the most significant damage are the erroneous reports, which have been cited by the attorney general of New York as part of the rationale for a recently announced investigation into whether ExxonMobil misled shareholders about the risks of climate change.

Key to understanding the Columbia team's unethical research methods is their handling of a 1989 presentation to Exxon's board by one of the company's senior scientists, Duane Levine. The contrast between the Columbia team's report and the relevant excerpts from the presentation illustrates the inaccuracies.

For example, the second paragraph of the Columbia team's report which appeared in the Los Angeles Times describes Levine's presentation as follows:

Duane Levine, Exxon's manager of science and strategy development, gave a primer to the company's board of directors in 1989, noting that scientists generally agreed gases released by burning fossil fuels could raise global temperatures significantly by the middle of the 21st century – between 2.7 and 8.1 degrees Fahrenheit – causing glaciers to melt and sea levels to rise, "with generally negative consequences."

The following statement was on the very first page of Levine's presentation but not included in the story.

In spite of the rush by some participants in the Greenhouse debate to declare that the science has demonstrated the existence of PEG (Potential Enhanced Greenhouse) today, I do not believe such is the case. Enhanced Greenhouse is still deeply imbedded in scientific uncertainty, and we will require substantial additional investigation to determine the degree to which its effects might be experience in the future.

Another paragraph in the Columbia team's report reads as follows:

So Levine laid out a plan for the "Exxon Position": In order to stop the momentum behind the issue, Levine said Exxon should emphasize that doubt. Tell the public that more science is needed before regulatory action is taken, he argued, and emphasize the "costs and economics of restricting carbon dioxide emissions."

Here is how Levine's presentation actually described Exxon's position:

Exxon's Position

- *Improve Understanding*
 - *Extend the Science*
 - *Include the Costs/Economics*
 - *Face Social-Political Realities*
- *Stress Environmentally Sound and Adaptive Efforts*
 - *Support Conservation*
 - *Restrict CFCs*
 - *Improve Global Re/De Forestation*

To be a responsible participant and part of the solution to PEG, Exxon's position should recognize and support 2 basic societal needs. First – to improve understanding of the problem, not just the science, but the costs and economics tempered by the socio-political realities. That's going to take years – probably decades. But there are measures already underway that will improve our environment in various ways and in addition reduce the growth in Greenhouse gases. That's the second need including things like energy conservation, restriction of CFC emissions, and efforts to increase the global ratio of re/de forestation. Of course, we'll need to develop other response options, implementing measures when they are cost effective in the near term and pursuing new technologies for the future.

Nowhere in Levine's presentation was there a suggestion to "emphasize that doubt" to stop momentum. An unapproved draft memo to Levine, which includes two separate warnings that it had not been fact checked by relevant company officials, contained such a recommendation. A reproduction of a section of the draft document was included as an illustration with the Los Angeles Times story.

With no apparent effect, we pointed out the obvious to Ms. Rust – that a draft document which warned readers that it had not been fact checked should not be given the same weight in her story as a presentation to the company's board of directors.

Also of note, Ms. Rust ignored a statement in the same draft document that undermined the thesis of the Oct. 9 story that claimed the company was planning to take advantage of the melting Arctic to develop oil and gas resources.

"Due to current scientific uncertainty, Exxon is not conducting specific impact studies with respect to particular company operations or geographic regions," the memo said.

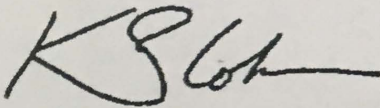
As you can see, the Columbia team's reports, description of ExxonMobil documents and overall conclusion bear no resemblance to the source materials or, in the language of your Policy on Misconduct in Research, "the Research is not accurately represented in the Research Record."

We understand that your policy on research misconduct includes a mechanism for a formal inquiry, which is why I hereby formally request an opportunity to discuss with you at far greater length our grievances, and the possible remedies available to us.

ExxonMobil has had numerous and productive relationships with Columbia University for many years, whether through research programs, interactions with the business school or recruiting of graduates for employment with our company. The interactions detailed above are not typical of the high standards and ethical behavior we have come to expect from your institution.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest possible convenience.

Yours truly,



c: Jonathan D. Schiller, A'Lelia Bundles, Lisa Carnoy, Noam Gottesman, Mark E. Kingdon, Jonathan Lavine, Esta Stecher, Rolando T. Acosta, Armen A. Avanessians, Andrew F. Barth, Kenneth Forde, Joseph A. Greenaway, Jr., James Harden, Marc Holliday, Benjamin Horowitz, Ann F. Kaplan, Charles Li, Paul J. Maddon, Vikram Pandit, Michael B. Rothfield, Claire Shipman, Kyriakos Tsakopoulos, John H. Coatsworth, Jane Booth, Steve Coll

The undersigned hereby certifies that the above is a true and correct copy of the original as the same appears in the records of the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, at Washington, D.C.

Very truly yours,
[Signature]

Special Agent in Charge

Witness my hand and the seal of the Department of the Interior, at Washington, D.C., this 1st day of June, 1964.

[Signature]
[Seal]

Special Agent in Charge